

May 18, 2010

**May is Stroke Awareness Month. Are You at Risk?**

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Stroke is the fourth leading cause of death in Nebraska. In 2008, stroke resulted in 825 Nebraska deaths and 3,451 hospitalizations.

Risk factors for stroke include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, tobacco and excessive alcohol use, physical inactivity and being overweight. The good news is that lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of stroke.

The most important risk factor for stroke is high blood pressure. One in four Nebraskans have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, and they are over six times as likely to report having a stroke. African Americans and Native Americans are significantly more likely to have high blood pressure. If lifestyle changes are not enough, your health care provider may prescribe medication to help reduce your blood pressure to a safe level.

Learn the warning signs of stroke, and call 9-1-1 immediately if you notice any of them. Immediate treatment can save someone's life and prevent or reduce disability. Warning signs include:

- sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- trouble walking, dizziness and loss of coordination
- sudden severe headache

There are time-sensitive treatments that can help undo the effects of stroke, but you have to seek immediate treatment at a hospital at the first signs of one.

To learn more about stroke, go to Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services website – <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/actfast>.